

OFFICIAL: Organic is better

as vitamins and antioxidants believed to help to combat disease.

Nutritionist and spokesperson for Australia's largest organic body, the Biological Farmers of Australia, Shane Heaton, welcomed the study, saying, "This adds to the growing body of evidence from around the world that organic produce not only contains less of the things you don't need, but also more of the things you do need in your diet."

"Of course, organic consumers have known this for years," Heaton adds. "This latest research should help everyone else, including some of our leading official advisory bodies, to be better informed and catch up with the organic movement."

The study found that organic fruit and vegetables contained between 20 and 40 per cent more antioxidants, which scientists believe can cut the risk of cancer and heart disease, Australia's biggest killers. They also had higher levels of vitamin C and beneficial minerals such as iron and zinc.

Carlo Leifert, co-ordinator of the EU-funded project, said the health benefits were so striking that moving to organic food was the equivalent of eating an extra portion of fruit and vegetables every day.

"If you have just 20 per cent more antioxidants in every portion of vegetables, then it's simply a question of maths - eating four portions of organic fruit and vegetables is the equivalent to eating five portions of traditional fruit and vegetables," he said.

Researchers grew fruit and vegetables and reared cattle on adjacent organic and non-organic sites on a 293ha farm at Newcastle University, plus other sites in Europe.

"Organic food isn't a luxury," says Heaton, "It's how food is meant to be."

Further details:

- The new study shows that organic milk has 60 to 80 per cent more nutrients in the summer than conventional milk, and 50 to 60 per cent more in the winter.
- Organic milk also has higher levels of vitamin E.
- Organic cheese can have up to twice as many nutrients than conventional varieties.
- Organic tomatoes, wheat, potatoes, cabbage, onions and wheat have 20 to 40 per cent more antioxidants than conventional fruit and vegetables.
- Organic spinach and cabbage have been found to have more minerals, including iron, copper and zinc.



THE BIGGEST STUDY into organic food has found it is more nutritious than ordinary produce and may help lengthen people's lives.

The evidence from the \$27 million four-year European Union-funded project should end years of debate and is likely to overturn official advice that eating organic food is a lifestyle choice and that there is no clear evidence that it is "more nutritious than other food".

The study will be peer reviewed and published over the next 12 months. But already one conclusion is clear: organically produced crops and dairy milk usually contain more "beneficial compounds" - such

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